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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS - EMERY, INL/GTIP - ZINN, CHAN-DOWNER

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TAGS: [PHUM ELAB ECON KTIP LA](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE - ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSON EFFORTS IN LAOS

REF: STATE 89216

Summary

¶1. The GOL, limited by resource constraints, continues to encourage anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) efforts by the international organizations and NGOs. The UN helps coordinate anti-trafficking efforts with donor partners, and several UN agencies and NGOs provide training, education, outreach to at-risk populations, and shelter to victims. December's Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) provides both a risk of increased trafficking and an opportunity to increase educational and enforcement activities. Laos continues to seek assistance in building capacity to catch and prosecute those responsible for TIP from and through Laos. End Summary.

Government Efforts

¶2. As a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked persons, Laos continues to seek ways to combat trafficking at all levels. Although resource limitations impede GOL activity and much of the anti-trafficking activity comes from international NGOs, the GOL encourages the anti-trafficking efforts and makes its own contributions. Lao police have established anti-trafficking divisions in all 16 provinces and the Lao Women's Union, a Communist Party mass organization, runs a shelter for women and children victims in Vientiane Municipality and has six counseling offices in Vientiane Municipality and four provinces.

United Nations

¶3. The coordination for most anti-trafficking activities in Laos runs through the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), though the GOL also has an interagency coordination committee. The UNIAP hosts periodic meetings, co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative, for the various stakeholders to exchange information and develop strategies to combat TIP. UNIAP also coordinates anti-trafficking activity in the Mekong sub-region as the Secretariat for the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT). UNIAP in conjunction with Lao Radio will soon begin broadcasting in the Lao language anti-trafficking informational spots and a multiple-part radio drama about a trafficking victim.

¶4. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with USG funding, provides training for police and Lao legal officials throughout the country and assesses the Lao laws and policies for effectiveness in combating TIP. Most recently, UNODC responded in August to requests from Xiengkhouang and Houaphan provinces to conduct anti-TIP training. Officials in those two provinces have noticed an increase in internal trafficking from those provinces to Laos' other northern provinces. In June, UNODC conducted similar workshops in Champassak and Vientiane provinces.

¶5. As one of its many projects in Laos, UNICEF works on providing information to potential trafficking victims and has developed two comic books in the Lao language that recount stories of trafficking victims, one for sexual exploitation and the other for labor exploitation. The books aim to educate secondary school students and will be distributed in five provinces.

¶6. World Vision has three U.S.-funded anti-TIP programs in the "southern corridor" provinces of Savannakhet, Champassak, and Khammuan -- a source and transit region for most of Lao's trafficking victims. Although World Vision does not yet have a MOU with the GOL, the NGO is relying on agreements signed directly with provincial officials to carry out two programs: one on prevention by disseminating information to potential victims, and another for training of police. The third component of its mission, assistance repatriating trafficking victims, will begin when the MOU with the central government is signed. World Vision has now translated its pamphlet, "10 Things You Need to Know about Human Trafficking," published earlier this year, into the Lao language.

¶7. The French NGO Acting for Women in Distressing Circumstances (AFESIP) helps in repatriating women and children TIP victims and reintegrating them into society. AFESIP provides counseling and medical care at its shelter in Savannakhet and aids in reuniting victims with their families. Some victims find employment with an AFESIP-affiliated social enterprise that sells organic beauty products in Vientiane city.

SEA Games

¶8. The GOL and many of the NGOs and international organizations who work on TIP issues are preparing special programs and materials for the December SEA Games in Vientiane. In addition to the sizable migration of young people to urban areas that Laos is experiencing, the GOL expects the SEA Games to attract even more young people to Vientiane city in search of work. UNIAP has coordinated with the National Tourism Authority, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Public Security, and the police to increase activities to protect potential trafficking victims and to combat sex tourism. Several NGOs report they will enhance their advertising campaigns against TIP during the SEA Games.

Comment

¶9. Anti-TIP efforts in Laos help to educate potential victims and Lao society about the dangers from traffickers willing to exploit the poverty of the country. The shelters and rehabilitation and reintegration services provide a much-needed safety net to victims. The police request for training in Xiengkhouang and Houaphan shows government officials want to increase their enforcement and prosecution capabilities. The November ILEA Bangkok course on Trafficking in Persons (reftel) comes at an opportune time to further assist the GOL in more effectively catching and prosecuting traffickers.